

The FRA-allowed age corrections from appendix F of Part 227² may be used, if desired, before considering revision for persistent STS. Rule 2 operates in the same way, whether age corrections are used or not.

II. RULE 1: REVISION FOR PERSISTENT IMPROVEMENT

If the average of the thresholds for 2, 3, and 4 kHz for either ear shows an improvement of 5 dB or more from the baseline value, and the improvement is present on one test and persistent on the next test, then the record should be identified for review by the audiologist, otolaryngologist, or physician for potential revision of the baseline for persistent improvement. The baseline for that ear should be revised to the test which shows the lower (more sensitive) value for the average of thresholds at 2, 3, and 4 kHz unless the audiologist, otolaryngologist, or physician determines and documents specific reasons for not revising. If the values of the three-frequency average are identical for the two tests, then the earlier test becomes the revised baseline.

III. RULE 2: REVISION FOR PERSISTENT STANDARD THRESHOLD SHIFT

A. If the average of thresholds for 2, 3, and 4 kHz for either ear shows a worsening of 10 dB or more from the baseline value, and the STS persists on the next periodic test (or the next test given at least 6 months later), then the record should be identified for review by the audiologist, otolaryngologist, or physician for potential revision of the baseline for persistent worsening. Unless the audiologist, otolaryngologist, or physician determines and documents specific reasons for not revising, the baseline for that ear should be revised to the test which shows the lower (more sensitive) value for the average of thresholds at 2, 3, and 4 kHz. If both tests show the same numerical value for the average of 2, 3, and 4 kHz, then the audiologist, otolaryngologist, or physician should revise the baseline to the earlier of the two tests, unless the later test shows better (more sensitive) thresholds for other test frequencies.

B. Following an STS, a retest within 90 days of the periodic test may be substituted for the periodic test if the retest shows bet-

ter (more sensitive) results for the average threshold at 2, 3, and 4 kHz.

C. If the retest is used in place of the periodic test, then the periodic test is retained in the record, but it is marked in such a way that it is no longer considered in baseline revision evaluations. If a retest within 90 days of periodic test confirms an FRA STS shown on the periodic test, the baseline will not be revised at that point because the required six-month interval between tests showing STS persistence has not been met. The purpose of the six-month requirement is to prevent premature baseline revision when STS is the result of temporary medical conditions affecting hearing.

D. Although a special retest after six months could be given, if desired, to assess whether the STS is persistent, in most cases, the next annual audiogram would be used to evaluate persistence of the STS.

APPENDIX D TO PART 227—AUDIOMETRIC TEST ROOMS

This appendix is mandatory.

A. Rooms used for audiometric testing shall not have background sound pressure levels exceeding those in Table D-1 when measured by equipment conforming at least to the Type 2 requirements of ANSI S1.4-1983 (Reaffirmed 2001) and to the Class 2 requirements of ANSI S1.11-2004, "Specification for Octave-Band and Fractional-Octave-Band Analog and Digital Filters."

B. The Director of the Federal Register approves the incorporation by reference of ANSI S1.4-1983 (Reaffirmed 2001) and S1.11-2004 in this section in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a) and 1 CFR part 51. You may obtain a copy of the incorporated standard from the American National Standards Institute at 1819 L Street, NW., Washington, DC 20036 or <http://www.ansi.org>. You may inspect a copy of the incorporated standard at the Federal Railroad Administration, Docket Room, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE., Washington, DC 20590, or at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For information on the availability of this material at NARA, call 202-741-6030, or go to http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/code_of_federal_regulations/ibr_locations.html.

TABLE D-1—MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE OCTAVE-BAND SOUND PRESSURE LEVELS FOR AUDIOMETRIC TEST ROOMS

Octave-band center frequency (Hz)	500	1000	2000	4000	8000
Sound pressure levels—supra-aural earphones	40	40	47	57	62
Sound pressure levels—insert earphones	50	47	49	50	56

²FRA and OSHA use the same age-correction provisions. FRA's is found in appendix F

of part 227 and OSHA's in appendix F of 29 CFR 1910.95.

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APPENDIX E TO PART 227—USE OF INSERT EARPHONES FOR AUDIOMETRIC TESTING

This appendix is mandatory.

Section 227.111(d) allows railroads to use insert earphones for audiometric testing. Railroads are not required to use insert earphones, however, where they elect to use insert earphones, they must comply with the requirements of this appendix.

I. ACCEPTABLE FIT

A. The audiologist, otolaryngologist, or other physician responsible for conducting the audiometric testing, shall identify ear canals that prevent achievement of an acceptable fit with insert earphones, or shall assure that any technician under his/her authority who conducts audiometric testing with insert earphones has the ability to identify such ear canals.

B. Technicians who conduct audiometric tests must be trained to insert the earphones correctly into the ear canals of test subjects and to recognize conditions where ear canal size prevents achievement of an acceptable insertion depth (fit).

C. Insert earphones shall not be used for audiometric testing of employees with ear canal sizes that prevent achievement of an acceptable insertion depth (fit).

II. PROPER USE

The manufacturer's guidelines for proper use of insert earphones must be followed.

III. AUDIOMETER CALIBRATION

A. Audiometers used with insert earphones must be calibrated in accordance with ANSI S3.6-2004, "Specification for Audiometers." The Director of the Federal Register approves the incorporation by reference of this standard in this section in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a) and 1 CFR part 51. You may obtain a copy of the incorporated standard from the American National Standards Institute at 1819 L Street, NW., Washington, DC 20036 or <http://www.ansi.org>. You may inspect a copy of the incorporated standard at the Federal Railroad Administration, Docket Room, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE., Washington, DC 20590, or at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For information on the availability of this material at NARA, call 202-741-6030, or go to http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/code_of_federal_regulations/ibr_locations.html.

B. Audiometers used with insert earphones must be calibrated using one of the couplers listed in Table 7 of ANSI S3.6-2004.

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C. The acoustical calibration shall be conducted annually.

D. The functional calibration must be conducted before each day's use of the audiometer.

IV. BACKGROUND NOISE LEVELS

Testing shall be conducted in a room where the background ambient noise octave-band sound pressures levels meet appendix D to this part.

V. CONVERSION FROM SUPRA AURAL EARPHONES

At the time of conversion from supra-aural to insert earphones, testing must be performed with both types of earphones.

A. The test subject must have a quiet period of at least 14 hours before testing. Hearing protectors may be used as a substitute for the quiet period.

B. The supra-aural earphone audiogram shall be compared to the baseline audiogram, or the revised baseline audiogram if appropriate, to check for a Standard Threshold Shift (STS). In accordance with §227.109(f)(2), if the audiogram shows an STS, retesting with supra-aural earphones must be performed within 90 days. If the resulting audiogram confirms the STS, then it is adopted as the current test instead of the prior one.

C. If retesting with supra-aural earphones is performed, then retesting with insert earphones must be performed at that time to establish the baseline for future audiometric tests using the insert earphones.

VI. REVISED BASELINE AUDIOGRAMS

A. If an STS is confirmed by the re-test with supra-aural earphones, the audiogram may become the revised baseline audiogram per the requirements of §227.109(i) for all future hearing tests with supra-aural earphones. The insert-earphone audiogram will become the new reference baseline audiogram for all future hearing tests performed with insert earphones.

B. If an STS is not indicated by the test with supra-aural earphones, the baseline audiogram remains the reference baseline audiogram for all future supra-aural earphone tests, until such time as an STS is observed. In this case, the insert-earphone audiogram taken at the same time will become the new reference baseline audiogram for all future hearing tests performed with insert earphones.

C. Transitioning Employees with Partial Shifts. Employers must account for the workers who are in the process of developing an STS (e.g., demonstrate a 7 dB average shift), but who at the time of the conversion to insert earphones do not have a 10 dB average shift. Employers who want to use insert earphones must enter the 7 dB shift information in the employee's audiometric test